

Why a WIPO Treaty for Persons with Print Disabilities can change lives

The dream for visually impaired students in Lesotho could become a reality

EIFL supports the conclusion of an effective treaty for the benefit of print disabled people at the Diplomatic Conference in Marrakesh, 17-28 June 2013. By ‘effective’ we mean an international copyright framework that will make a real difference to the lives of blind, visually impaired and print disabled people around the world.

The WIPO study on copyright limitations and exceptions for visually impaired people¹ highlighted the work of the National University of Lesotho Library (NUL) that started taking blind students some years ago. A room for Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) equipped with a Braille and a computer with JAWS screen-reading software was set up in the library, where books are transcribed into Braille.



Perkins Braille at Thomas Mofolo Library, NUL

Despite the best efforts of the Special Educational Needs Unit and library staff, there was never enough material available in accessible formats for the students. The process of requesting printed books from libraries in neighbouring South Africa and making them accessible could take up to two months, too long to complete an assignment.

“I studied at NUL since 2005 and graduated in 2010 as a lawyer with a Bachelor of Law degree”, said Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD).



Photo credit: Public Eye
Nkhasi Sefuthi, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD)

“With regard to accessing materials, it was a disaster, and I had to mainly rely on my friends to read out for me. Visually impaired students were marginalized because we could not access materials in the same way as sighted students, especially in electronic form. I am very excited about the treaty being negotiated in Marrakesh. Imagine being able to easily get accessible materials from other countries, that would be a dream. It would spur other students in Lesotho to study and lead fulfilled lives. It will assist the real efforts of the government of Lesotho to promote the participation of people with disability in society”, said Nkhasi.

Supported by the Lesotho Library Consortium (LELICO)

Read more at EIFL in action: www.eifl.net/news/wipo-diplomatic-conference-vips

¹ http://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=75696